

Mission San Jose Y San Miguel De Aguayo,  
The Ramparts  
6539 San Jose Road  
San Antonio  
Bexar County  
Texas

HABS No. TX-333 E

HABS  
TEX  
IS-SANTV,  
SA-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MISSION SAN JOSE Y SAN MIGUEL  
DE AGUAYO, THE RAMPARTS

HABS  
TEX  
15-SANT.V,  
5A-

HABS No. TX-333-E

Location: 6539 San Jose Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner: The State of Texas.

Present Use: Public museum.

Significance: The ramparts were an important part of the San Jose Mission, for their sole purpose was to protect the mission habitants against attacks by hostile Indians. All 18th century Spanish missions included the ramparts in the building plans for the mission complexes as essential defense measures.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 176B.
2. Original and subsequent owners: See History section of Mission San Jose Y San Miguel De Aguayo, HABS No. TX-333.
3. Original plans and construction: Throughout their existence, all of the missions were subjected to periodic attacks from the hostile Apaches and the Comanches. The earlier mission buildings were of a temporary nature, yet they were built to offer some degree of protection against Indian attacks. The typical construction materials were sticks, straw and adobe.

In the 1740s, following the mission's move to its present site, permanent buildings constructed primarily of stone were built.

In 1767 or 1768, Governor Jacinto Barrios y Jaurequi visited San Jose and recorded his observations of the arrangements of the buildings. In his report, Governor Barrios stated that "the large square was divided into eight smaller squares of which four were formed by the Indian houses." Contemporary drawings for this type of complex exist and help interpret Governor Barrios' remarks. One such drawing, undated and unsigned, depicts a group of houses or buildings located between the Rio de San Antonio and the Rio de San Pedro. This drawing has been thought to represent the early Presidio of Bexar. However, nothing in the way of present fact or literary record indicates that the Presidio ever existed in the configuration portrayed by the drawing. This configuration, however, is so closely described in Governor Barrios' report of San Jose, and as the

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mission was then the only permanent settlement in addition to the Presidio on the west side of the San Antonio River, it may be that this unidentified drawing represents an early phase of the San Jose Mission.

When Governor Barrios refers to a large square divided into smaller squares, he is describing concentric rather than subdivided squares. This concentric plan is an outer row of buildings forming the perimeter of the complex. At each of the four corners the buildings form a bastion, thereby giving the whole complex the general configuration of fortified places of the time.

A second row of buildings forms a second square inside the perimeter square with a space corresponding to a street separating them. A third row is shown inside the second square and separated from it again by a street-way. This third row, then, defines the central open plaza or square. To follow Barrios' description, this plan depicts three concentric squares of row buildings; if a fourth row were added, we would have the four "squares" of Indian houses and the four remaining divisions which would be the three inner "streets" and center plaza respectively, thereby creating "a square divided into eight smaller squares." If at one time San Jose had the appearance depicted by this unidentified plan, it would certainly reinforce Fr. Ciprian's statement in 1749 that the Mission was "a veritable fortress."

Another report by Gaspar Jose de Solis described the Mission compound in 1768 as consisting of one large square, 220 varas long on a side, with a gate at each corner and two bastions on diagonal corners. This description is in keeping with the military or defense aspect of the perimeter buildings.

Fr. Morfi later described the Mission compound in 1778 and mentioned specifically "the abundance of its defenses." He recorded that the perimeter buildings formed an inner square of 212 varas on a side. These buildings were the apartments for the Indians. The exterior perimeter was 220 varas on a side.

According to Fr. Morfi, there were four bastions, one at each corner, and in the center between the bastions respectively were located four identical entrances. This description is borne out by that of Fr. Lopez writing eleven years later in 1789. Fr. Lopez recorded that "the rampart has four gates, each suitable for its purpose and directly facing one point of the compass. All have good strong locks."

Fr. Morfi further explained that over each gateway a low bastion or bulwark was erected from which to defend the opening. The walls of the four passageways were provided with loopholes, and

the apartments, which these walls formed a part of, were reserved for the most trusted Mission Indians who, in the event that the gates were rushed, could "fire safely upon the enemy" as they attempted to traverse the passageway into the Mission compound.

In addition, Fr. Morfi refers to a fifth gateway in "the west line of rooms, in front of the church." This gate had an iron grating and was the only one left open "each day, for the service." Fr. Lopez in 1789 recorded the four "main entrances" but reported that there were also "two other smaller ones at places where they were deemed necessary on account of the growth of the pueblo...."

The Indian apartments at the time of Fr. Solis' account in 1768 were constructed of stone and built along the inside face of the perimeter walls to become a part of them. These habitations or apartments were four varas in depth; thus the whole of the outer works made a formidable rampart over twelve feet thick.

These apartments ranged around five to six varas in length (approximately 16-20 feet) and consisted of the principal apartment with an adjoining kitchen and oven for each family. Fr. Lopez also reported that all of the houses had hand-carved wooden doors "some with good locks," and that they were "sufficiently protected against rain, wind, and other inclemencies of the weather," implying either that the walls were well stuccoed or that they had better than usual roofs.

- B. Historical Context: See Mission San Jose y San Miguel de Aguayo, HABS No. TX-333.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The ramparts are a one-story, flat-roofed stone structure forming the perimeter of a large trapezoidal open area.
2. Condition of fabric: The walls are sound and the buildings are currently well maintained.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The buildings are about 18 feet wide and 450 feet long on the north, south, and west, and about 600 feet long on the east.
2. Foundation: Rubble stone.

3. Walls: Rubble stone.
  4. Structural system, framing: Load bearing masonry walls; wood roof framing.
  5. Openings:
    - a. Doorways and doors: Openings spanned by wood lintels; wood doors.
    - b. Windows: Openings spanned by wood lintels; wood casement windows.
  6. Roof: Flat; covering not known.
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plan: A series of adjacent rooms, all opening onto the Mission Plaza.
  2. Flooring: Originally packed earth.
- D. Site:
1. General setting and orientation: The buildings form the perimeter of the Mission Plaza, a large trapezoidal area oriented to the cardinal points of the compass.

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Survey  
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### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The San Antonio project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in the summer of 1968, and was made possible with funds from HABS and two sponsors, the Bexar County Historical Survey Committee and the San Antonio Conservation Society. Under the direction of James Massey, Chief of HABS, the project was carried out by Wesley I. Shank (Iowa State University), project supervisor, and by student assistant architects, Charles W. Barrow (University of Texas); Les Beilinson (University of Miami); William H. Edwards (University of Illinois); and Larry D. Hermesen (Iowa State University) at the HABS field office in the former Ursuline Academy buildings, San Antonio. John C. Garner, Jr., Director of Bexar County Architecture Survey, did the outside work on the written documentaries. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D. C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for preparation of transmittal to the Library of Congress. Dewey G. Mears of Austin, Texas took the documentary photographs of the San Antonio structures.

The 1983 photographs of the Indian apartments are part of 1983 San Antonio Missions project, which was sponsored by the Southwest Regional Office, National Park Service. John Lowe of the HABS/HAER Office, Washington, D.C., took the photographs.